

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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SUBJECT: FRENCH VETO EC COMMISSION YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT
PROPOSALS

REF: (A) 77 BRUSSELS 15361 (B) 77 BRUSSELS 14050

1. BECAUSE OF STRONG FRENCH OBJECTIONS, A HIGHLY-TOUTED
COMMUNITY INITIATIVE TO COPE WITH YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT WAS
SIDETRACKED AT THE JUNE 29 MEETING OF THE EC COUNCIL OF
LABOR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS MINISTERS IN LUXEMBOURG.

2. THE EC COMMISSION PROPOSAL, FIRST PUBLICLY FLOATED IN
OCTOBER LAST YEAR (REF B) WOULD USE THE EC SOCIAL FUND
TO FINANCE CREATION OF AN ESTIMATED 100,000 JOBS FOR
YOUNG PEOPLE UNDER 25 BY PROVIDING (A) PREMIUMS TO
PRIVATE EMPLOYERS SETTING UP NEW JOBS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE,
AND (B) FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO MEMBER STATE GOVERNMENTS
FOR EMPLOYING YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR.

3. ACCORDING TO A SOURCE IN THE UK DELEGATION, THE FRENCH
AT FIRST OBJECTED TO BOTH ASPECTS OF THE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT
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PROGRAM, BUT AFTER EXTENSIVE DISCUSSION IN LUXEMBOURG
NARROWED THEIR OPPOSITION DOWN TO THE PUBLIC SECTOR JOB
SCHEME. HOWEVER, OTHER DELEGATIONS REFUSED TO APPROVE A
PROGRAM INVOLVING ONLY INCENTIVES FOR PRIVATE EMPLOYERS.

4. IN AN UNUSUAL PRESS CONFERENCE IN BRUSSELS JUNE 30,
EC VICE PRESIDENT HENK VREDELING, COMMISSIONER FOR SOCIAL

AFFAIRS, TOOK THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT TO TASK FOR ITS OBJECTIONS TO THE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROPOSAL. HE SAID THAT AFTER IT WAS MOVED THAT THE COUNCIL APPROVE THE PROPOSAL BY A MAJORITY VOTE, THE FRENCH LABOR MINISTER CLAIMED THE MATTER WAS OF "VITAL INTEREST" TO FRANCE AND THEREBY INVOKED A COUNCIL RULE REQUIRING UNANIMITY.

5. "THIS IS A STUPID VETO," VREDELING SAID ANGRILY. EXPRESSING WHAT HE CLAIMED WAS NOT ONLY HIS PERSONAL DISAPPOINTMENT BUT THE DISAPPOINTMENT OF MANY SOCIAL AFFAIRS MINISTERS, VREDELING SAID: "I DEEPLY REGRET THAT THINGS ARE GOING THAT WAY ON THE EVE OF THE BREMEN SUMMIT.... SUCH AN OPPOSITION REMINDS ME OF THE PROBLEMS WE KNEW IN 1965. BUT NO TRADE INTEREST IS INVOLVED THIS TIME. THIS IS JUST A QUESTION OF THE RIGHTS OF YOUNG PEOPLE."

6. VREDELING CALLED ATTENTION TO STATISTICS SHOWING THAT PEOPLE UNDER 25 ACCOUNT FOR 35 PERCENT OF ALL REGISTERED UNEMPLOYED IN FRANCE. "I WOULD NOT LIKE TO BE IN THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT, TRYING TO EXPLAIN THIS TO PUBLIC OPINION," VREDELING SAID, ADDING: "I GET THE FEELING THAT THIS DECISION CAME FROM THE HIGHEST LEVEL IN THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT."

7. AN EC COUNCIL PRESS RELEASE ISSUED JUNE 30 SAID THAT THE "COUNCIL IS READY TO MAKE A REPORT" ON THE YOUTH UNCLASSIFIED

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UNEMPLOYMENT DISPUTE IN EUROPEAN COUNCIL IN BREMEN. VREDELING SAID THAT HE HOPED THE BREMEN SUMMIT WOULD TAKE UP THE SUBJECT "BECAUSE THIS IS THE MAIN SOCIAL PROBLEM OF OUR TIME--THERE IS NO SENSE TRYING TO FIND A WAY TO MONETARY UNION IF WE ARE NOT PREPARED TO SOLVE THIS SOCIAL PROBLEM." HINTON

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